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Delhi polls 2015: BJP doesn't have digital edge like in other states

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By Sanjay Kumar, Shreyas Sardesai and Pranav Gupta

NEW DELHI: A smaller number of electorate and high spatial concentration make campaign organisation in Delhi very different from that in the other states. While traditional campaign activities continue to hold importance, increasing penetration of mainstream media and social media is redefining the way parties and candidates organise their election campaign. Media penetration not only increases access to information before voting but also changes the impact of traditional activities like road shows and rallies.



(Surveys conducted by the...)





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IN-DEPTH COVERAGE

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Surveys conducted by the Centre for the Society of Developing Societies (CSDS) reveal that almost four-fifths (78%) of Delhi voters watch news on television daily.

About half (48%) of the voters read a newspaper daily. Close to three out of every ten voters (28%) in the city use Facebook. Twitter, on the other hand, has much less penetration at about one in ten (11%).

In contrast to its position in most other states, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Delhi enjoys no major advantage over opponents among those who have a high exposure to media.

In the [Lok Sabha election](#) specifically, the party performed best among those who had very low or no media exposure. The gap between the [Aam Aadmi Party](#) (AAP) and the [BJP](#) was least among those with high media exposure in the previous assembly election.

AAP's vote share among those with high media exposure has always been much greater than its average vote share. Voting for the [Congress](#) seems to have a clear negative relationship with media exposure as the party fares poorly among those with high media exposure (see table 1).

A similar trend follows when we disaggregate further and study each media platform separately. In the Lok Sabha election, the gap between the BJP and [AAP](#) among those who rarely or never watch news on

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television was 27 percentage points, compared to 13 points among those who watch it daily. The frequency of accessing news on the internet doesn't determine likelihood of voting for the BJP.

On the other hand, AAP receives higher support among those who use the internet daily. Newspaper readership doesn't have a clear pattern; the BJP maintains an advantage among daily readers while there was reversal in the trend for AAP in the Lok Sabha election (see table 2).

Fight for Digital Space

USE OF VARIOUS FORMS OF MEDIA & VOTING PATTERN

			Assembly Election 2013			Lok Sabha Election 2014		
			In Percent					
Watching news on TV	Daily	78	23	35	31	15	46	33
	Rarely/Never	8	29	29	25	15	54	27
Reading Newspaper	Daily	48	20	37	32	14	54	30
	Rarely/Never	29	31	32	25	15	45	34
News on Internet	Daily	24	19	34	37	10	45	37
	Rarely/Never	58	27	34	26	17	46	32



VOTING BEHAVIOUR BY LEVEL OF MEDIA EXPOSURE

			2013 Assembly Election			2014 Lok Sabha Election		
			Cong	BJP	AAP	Cong	BJP	AAP
Very Low/ No Exposure			33	34	18	15	51	28
Low Exposure			30	31	27	18	39	38
Moderate Exposure			25	33	29	14	50	30
High Exposure			18	37	35	12	45	37

SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE AND VOTING BEHAVIOUR

			Assembly polls 2013		
		In Percent	Cong	BJP	AAP
Facebook	Users	28	20	35	35
	Non - Users	72	26	34	27
Twitter	Users	11	16	28	34
	Non - Users	89	26	34	29

VOTING BEHAVIOUR BY AGE

			2013 Assembly Election			2014 Lok Sabha Election		
			Cong	BJP	AAP	Cong	BJP	AAP
Up to 25 Years			18	32	36	11	43	40
26 - 35 Years			25	34	29	16	44	36
36 - 45 Years			27	32	32	15	47	33
46 - 55 Years			24	37	28	18	47	31
56 and above			28	37	23	17	53	21

All figures are In percent

Source: Election Surveys conducted by CSDS in Delhi

In 2013, AAP and BJP drew equal support among voters who use Facebook and AAP, in fact, led among

Twitter users. Owing to its lower class support base and minimal presence on social media, the Congress has a clear disadvantage in terms of social media use (see table 3).

The heavy focus of AAP and the BJP on running a sophisticated campaign is probably explained by the profile of the user base. Digital campaign could play a crucial role in attracting young voters who are now emerging as a distinct political constituency in Delhi's politics.

Social media use and access to mainstream media are higher among the youth who have now started voting differently from older voters.

Again contrary to the national pattern, the BJP is weaker among younger voters in Delhi. In the previous assembly election, AAP had managed to take a narrow lead over the BJP among voters aged below 25. Even in the Lok Sabha election, the gap between the two parties was lowest among young voters (see table 4).

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Despite the emergence of these new spaces for campaigning, the traditional activities like public meetings and road shows continue to hold greater importance. The digital campaign might help in building a positive perception for a party. But for converting this perception into votes, it is important for parties to have active booth level workers who are able to mobilise their supporters on polling day. The BJP has been organising multiple meetings of its booth level workers and panna prabharis (those in charge of a page each of electoral rolls and responsible for about 50 voters) and AAP has been trying to recreate the volunteer network which had helped it in door-to-door campaigning last time.

With close to a quarter of the voters deciding whom to vote for just a few days before polling or on the day of polling, it is crucial for parties to ensure that they continue to dominate the electoral discourse in the next ten days. In a highly televised election like Delhi's, each move by a party and statements made by leaders would reach voters and hold potential of influencing the mind of the voters.

Multiple invitations by Arvind Kejriwal for a televised debate between the CM candidates and the string of interviews given by Kiran Bedi in the past week reassert the significance of media in this election.

(Sanjay Kumar is Director, CSDS. Shreyas Sardesai is a research associate and Pranav Gupta is a researcher at Lokniti Research Programme)